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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 26 August 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the expansion of settlements in the Golan Heights, issued on 26 August 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 40 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ernst SUCHARIPA
Permanent Representative
of Austria to the United Nations

* A/53/150.

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the expansion of settlements in the Golan Heights, issued on 26 August 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union is concerned about reports that on 19 August an Israeli ministerial committee approved a plan to expand settlements in the Golan Heights. Under the plan, 2,300 new housing units and 2,500 holiday units are to be built in Mamot, Ma'ale Gamla, Kanaf and Had Nex.

If such a plan is implemented, it would represent a significant setback to the efforts to resume the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. It would also constitute a further complication for the implementation of the principle of "land for peace" and raise questions about Israel's commitment to the peace process.

Recalling the Cardiff European Council conclusions, in which grave concern was expressed at the lack of progress on the Syrian track, the European Union urges Israel not to implement the above-mentioned plan concerning the expansion of Golan settlements nor to take any other related steps which would jeopardize the peace process.

In this context the European Union reiterates its position that settlements in the occupied territories are illegal and in contravention of international law.